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ABSTRACT

Ways in which community college systems might better serve the needs of minority and disadvantaged students through planning are suggested. A number of organizational variables that appeared to affect achievement in 10 previous OEO state planning projects are presented and discussed. The variables are divided into three structural levels: state system characteristics, state agency characteristics, and inner-project characteristics. The variables related to System Characteristics were: (1) the degree of state-level control over community college funding and budgeting directly affected the success or failure of coordinated planning efforts; (2) the existence of uniform procedures and a high level of homogeneity among community colleges facilitated coordinated planning. Variables related to Agency Characteristics were: (1) successful planning relies on aggressive leadership from the state community college agency; (2) autonomy of the state community college agency facilitated project accomplishment; (3) projects tended to be more successful when they were a major organizational division of the state agency, with access to the state director; (4) project accomplishment was related to the level of community and campus involvement in planning. The Inner-Project Characteristics variables were: (1) staffing configurations and staff size were significant factors in project achievement; (2) combined short-range planning and program assistance objectives proved most successful in the OEO projects. (DB)

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# THE EFFECT OF ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE ON PLANNING

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A report of the
National Dissemination Project
for Community Colleges

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# FOREWORD

This report was prepared by the National Dissemination Project to suggest ways in which community college systems might better serve the needs of minority and disadvantaged students through planning.

The National Dissemination Project is an outgrowth of ten earlier Office of Economic Opportunity projects undertaken by state community college agencies to develop comprehensive planning capacities to serve the disadvantaged and to provide institutional support in program development. It has become obvious from the high drop out rate alone, which often approaches 90 percent for disadvantaged students compared with a 30 percent attrition rate for other students, that community colleges are not successfully meeting the educational and career needs of disadvantaged students. A new approach to planning appears to be a critical need.

The lessons learned in the OEO planning projects as well as in other innovative programs and projects across the nation have been assessed by the National Dissemination Project. In total, visits have been made to over 100 community colleges in 16 states, and contacts established with state directors and concerned groups and agencies.

In this report, a number of organizational variables which appeared to affect achievement in the OEO state planning projects are presented and discussed. A deeper understanding of the

structure of educational systems is essential as a background for understanding how the process of change might be improved, and better serve the needs of the disadvantaged.

It is hoped that this report will serve as an introduction and a focus for concern. The National Dissemination Project will continue to provide resource information between now and August 1, 1973 in helping individuals, colleges and systems better serve minority and disadvantaged students. This will be done by providing information, contacts, and assistance in planning for change. For further information contact:

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# THE EFFECT OF ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE ON PLANNING

A review of the OEO community college planning projects reveals that a number of organizational factors played a significant role in project success or failure. These factors related to (1) the nature of the community college system as a whole, (2) the power, influence, and leadership of the state community college agency, and (3) the position and structure of the OEO project within the state community college system.

Organizational structure is, of course, only one variable in the change support process, but it is a significant one. A deeper understanding of the macro-structure of education--both the structure of state agencies and the relationships between various institutions and agencies--is essential as a background for understanding system change. If one underestimates or misinterprets the effect of organizational structure, efforts at planned change are apt to be frustrated, and explanation of success or failure will be inadequate.

Although the literature on change in complex organizations is extensive, comparatively limited attention has been given to provide a framework for examining the structural characteristics of state educational systems and efforts at change within these systems. Hopefully, this report might provide such a framework.

Early in 1970, the Office of Program Development at OEO asked ten states to submit funding proposals for major planning projects in the community college field. This initiative arose

out of a concern that the community colleges were in a unique position to provide services to those minority and disadvantaged groups who had previously been excluded from post-secondary educational opportunity, and that if significant progress was to be made, state planning was needed.

State-level agencies working with community colleges in Washington, California, Illinois, Wisconsin, New Jersey, New York, Vermont, Texas, North Carolina, and Florida received OEO/OPD planning grants. Specifically, the grants were to be used to strengthen planning capacities by (1) developing a comprehensive state plan for disadvantaged education in community colleges, and (2) improving planning support to local colleges in developing programs for the disadvantaged. Subsequently, the New Jersey grant was terminated at early date, and the Wisconsin project delayed until late 1972. But aside from these two states, much is to be learned from the experiences of the OEO projects.

The organizational variables discussed in this report are divided into three structural levels: state system characteristics, state agency characteristics, and inner-project characteristics.

SYSTEM CHARACTERISTICS

1. The degree of state-level control over community college funding and budgeting directly affected the success or failure of coordinated planning efforts. When there was considerable state control of community college funds, goal setting and planning proceeded on a more substantial base. Of the project states, only Florida, Washington, and Vermont are characterized by almost total state-level or central funding.

Florida has 28 community and junior colleges operating in a statewide system which has evolved since 1965, when the state legislature approved junior college "areas." In 1971, the state eliminated the requirement of local tax support and began to assume 75 to 80 percent of the colleges operating expenses. Student fees make up the remainder. Since the system of state funding was just being initiated during the OEO project period, there was still a strong tradition of independence by local colleges, and this hampered coordinated planning efforts. However, the OEO project was successful in establishing a needed data base for state planning, and with the movement toward a Program-Planning-Budgeting-System for the colleges, state planning efforts will likely be advanced.

Washington's community college system is in many ways a West Coast mirror-image of Florida's, but with one major exception--state funding has a longer tradition in Washington than in Florida--and this meant greater acceptance of the state planning function. The Washington State Board for Community College Education was established through legislation in 1967, and since then state funds have accounted for 80 percent of each college's operating income. One might predict that within three to four years Florida colleges will have reached the same level of acceptance of coordinated planning as Washington colleges.

In the case of Vermont, central funding was inherent in the system from the beginning--a rather unique situation. But then, the Vermont Regional Community College Commission is unique in almost every way. Prior to 1970, there were no public community colleges in the state, although there was a growing recognition that they were needed. As a result, the OEO grant was used to pre-plan a demonstration community college system.

What came out of the planning effort was a college without walls, making use of community facilities and resources, with a central office and three regional site offices. For several years now the Commission has operated on OEO and foundation funding, although it will soon receive state support.

Unlike the situation elsewhere, the local sites are not independent colleges, financially, or otherwise, and a coordinated approach to planning is generally accepted by all.

Aside from the three examples of central funding noted above, the other OEO project states were characterized by often complicated funding formulas. In California and Illinois, the state supplies about thirty percent of the colleges' operating costs, with most of the balance coming from the districts. In New York community colleges receive fifty percent of their capital expenses from the state, and fifty percent from the local district; they receive forty percent of their operating budget from the state if they are offering "full opportunity" programs, and 33% if they are not. North Carolina may provide up to two-thirds of a college's operating expenses, but the amount varies according to need. Obviously, these complicated funding patterns and continued reliance upon local funding encourage college independence and hinder efforts at coordinated planning.

2. The existence of uniform procedures and a high level of homogeneity among community colleges facilitated coordinated planning. Homogeneity was often associated with physical proximity and overlapping institutional concerns. In most project states, staff members found themselves frustrated with large and diverse two-year college systems, where even the community college label was not uniformly accepted.

North Carolina is an example of such a diverse system. With 54 public two-year colleges, it is the second largest system in the country; yet many of the small technical institutes have little in common with the larger urban colleges such as Central Piedmont Community College. Compared to Washington State, for example, North Carolina has nearly twice as many two-year colleges and only one-third the total enrollment. To confuse things even more, North Carolina colleges maintain different tuition rates for in-districts and out-of-district students.

As a result, the North Carolina project was most successful in working with those close-proximity colleges with which good contacts had already been established through the National Laboratory for Higher Education (the project fundee).

Washington faced a somewhat similar situation. The state is naturally divided on an East-West axis by the Cascade mountains, and college's interests roughly correspond to this division. The division is also between rural and urban colleges, with most urban colleges clustering in the Seattle-Tacoma area. The Washington project, centered in Seattle, found that it had a maximum impact with the primarily urban and suburban schools of that area. For one thing, these colleges had already recognized their common interests through creation of a Minority Affairs Consortium, and were receptive to planning assistance.

The result was that the Washington project had a differential impact by geographical area, and to some extent by minority group. Blacks were the largest minority group in the Seattle-Tacoma area and their interests were consequently emphasized. Chicano and Native American groups were primarily rural and located in the eastern part of the state, so their interests did not receive sufficient attention.

AGENCY CHARACTERISTICS

1. Successful planning relies on aggressive leadership from the state community college agency. OEO projects which lacked state-level leadership, no matter how dedicated project staff members might have been, were placed in the unenviable position of advocating change which they knew the administrators within their own agency might not support.

Such was notably the case in one OEO project state, were the project was handled through the administrative arm of the Community College Board. The community college agency had tended to limit its concerns to setting regulations for the execution of state laws, establishing minimum requirements for probation and dismissal, requiring the colleges to establish guidelines for student behavior, and setting minimum educational requirements. State leadership in planning and policy matters was minimal during the OEO project period, and tended to support development of academic transfer programs for the disadvantaged, whereas the OEO project supported development of career education programs.

In contrast, the Florida OEO project benefited from a commitment to aggressive leadership from the Florida Division of Community Colleges, even though its statutory powers were similar to those of the California Community College Board of Governors.

A Florida Department of Education report recognizes this commitment to leadership, by noting: "In its relationship to the Community Colleges, the Division places a major emphasis on its leadership role, rather than the regulatory aspect of this responsibility because such emphasis is necessary if the Division is to be a major contributor to the Federal-State-Local partnership in education at the community college level."*

State leadership, as exhibited in Florida, and several other notable project states, involved the following components:

- -Diagnosis and evaluation of the performance, problems, and needs of the community college system.
- -The translation of overall objectives and specific educational programs, projects, and development plans.
- -Support in implementation of plans, programs, and projects at the state, regional, and institutional levels.
- -Formulation of basic policies, priorities and targets, including recommendation to the State Board of Education on resource allocation (to receive increased attention through program budgeting).

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*Report for Florida's Public Community Colleges. Department of Education, Lee Henderson, Director. March, 1972. Page 12.

-Planning, cooperation, and coordination with other divisions and state agencies in all matters relating to community colleges.

2. Autonomy of the state community college agency facilitated project accomplishment. Inversely, when the state community college agency was only part of a larger educational agency, its concerns were apt to be subordinated and project efforts stymied.

In New York, the OEO project was funded through the State University of New York, of which the Bureau of two-year colleges is only one of several divisions covering the entire range of post-secondary educational institutions. There was no separate, autonomous agency whose sole concern was the community colleges, and consequently community college's interests were frequently subordinated to other interests. The OEO project staff was concerned about this situation and its likely affects on any community college planning effort. It therefore proposed creation of six community college districts in the state and called for a state director and six regional coordinators. For each of the 38 community colleges and six agricultural/technical schools it proposed a local advisory and review committee.

The State University system rejected this proposal, and instead imposed four higher education regions on the state. This factor, along with several others to be noted later, resulted in project underachievement. No state agency or regional districts were created, although a dozen local advisory committees were established as a result of the project.

The California, Vermont, and Washington OEO projects were sponsored by fairly independent and autonomous agencies, concerned exclusively with community colleges. In most cases this resulted in a high level of support and commitment to the project by the agency.

3. Projects tended to be more successful when they were a major organizational division of the state agency, with access to the state director. Common sense would suggest that the closer one is to the state director, the more influence one would have, both politically and otherwise, and the more successful any planning efforts might be. This appeared to be true in the OEO projects studied.

A recent study by Thad Beyle, Sureva Seligson, and Deil Wright, would tend to support this conclusion. The authors note:

> These data suggest that there is a connection between location in the governor's office (or state director's office), higher level of agency performance, and a greater tendency to be relevant to the decision-making process. This provides reform advocates with some tangible evidence that placing state agencies close to the governors (or state directors) can lead in the direction of desired results.*

The Washington and Vermont projects provide examples of higher organizational status and access to state directors. while several projects found their planning effort undermined by lack of access to decision makers and low organizational status.

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*Beyle, Seligson and Wright, "New Directions in State Planning," Journal of the American Institute of Planners, September, 1969, page 335.

In Washington, the OEO project received divisional status in its first year through the Minority Affairs Office of the state community college system, and in its second year as a separate Research and Planning Office. As such, the project gained both visibility and status within the system. In carrying out its planning and program development activities, the project worked closely with other divisions in the system rather than isolating itself as a side project. The project also reported directly to the deputy director of the State Board for Community College Education, who helped mobilize system support. These factors meant that the project staff could speak and act with some authority on behalf of the state system.

The Vermont project as noted previously, was in the unique position of itself being the state community college agency. Although it had problems in the beginning of recognition and status within the overall state college system, it did benefit from access to the governor and other high ranking state officials. In 1970, Governor Davis established the Vermont Regional Community College Commission to oversee the pre-planning of a community college demonstration model with the OEO grant. From this point on, the OEO project was directly accountable to the governor and had continuing contact with him. Both organizational status and access were thus provided, allowing the Community College Commission to document its performance to the many skeptics in state government.

4. Project accomplishment was related to the level of community and campus involvement in planning. This is necessarily the case in all systems including community college systems, which rely upon persuasion rather than authority to affect change. The OEO projects were to emphasize campus and community involvement, but in many cases involvement was unsatisfactory, either due to lack of project initiative or to resistance by college administrators to wide involvement. Where such involvement was lacking, accomplishments were minimal.

The Washington project attempted to involve various elements of the campus and community in planning, but failed in four or five notable instances. These failures were attributed to campus refusal to involve the community. In evaluating project success, those campuses which neglected involvement were found to have achieved the least.

A similar situation existed in Florida. There, the project staff encouraged institutional-level planning through preparation of a practical planning guide and checklist. The guide was designed to help each college identify needs, establish goals and objectives, and involve various elements of the campus community college in planning. But campus involvement was not uniformly secured. In many cases only one or several staff members completed the planning checklist, and a full one-third of the colleges did not react at all to the checklist and planning guide.

In both Washington and Florida, local involvement and understanding of the planning effort was obviously lacking in notable cases, and this hampered project achievement. Several changes may have improved the situation, including (1) more extensive and continuing contact with the resisting campuses to set the groundwork for planning, and (2) more follow-up visits to insure a desirable level of commitment and involvement.

In North Carolina the National Laboratory for Higher Education developed a highly successful method of improving campus involvement with the OEO project. This consisted of organizing "Educational Development Teams" on each campus with members representing administration, faculty, and students. These EDT's organized the local planning effort and worked to involve campus and community groups. A central EDT at NLHE provided full-time assistance to the local EDT's through frequent visits and numerous workshops--an arrangement which was key to rpoject success. The assumption was that the greater the involvement by major college divisions, the stronger and more lasting would be the results of planning efforts.

Evaluation of EDT's tended to support this assumption. Those colleges which organized full cross-divisional teams--with administration, faculty and student members--were more successful than those which organized only partial teams.

The relationship of involvement to achievement in planning has been largely explored. Involvement from concerned groups and divisions has often been viewed as intrinsically desirable, but little has been said or written of its practical benefit in education.

A recent study by Neal Gross, Joseph B. Giacquinta, and Marilyn Bernstein, suggests several important benefits supported by OEO project experiences*:

1. Participation produces higher morale, and high morale is necessary for successful planning
2. Participation leads to greater commitment, and a high degree of commitment is required for affecting change
3. Participation leads to greater clarity about the planning process and proposed actions, and clarity is necessary for support
4. Participation reduces initial resistance and thereby facilitates accomplishment.

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*Gross, Giacquinta, and Bernstein, Implementing Organizational Innovation, Basic Books Inc., New York, 1971, page 25.

## INNER-PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS

1. Staffing configurations and staff size were significant factors in project achievement. It would appear from a study of the OEO projects that the staffing configuration in which an individual participates has an important influence on his achievement and that at least a minimal full-time staff size is needed to affect change. Projects were most successful which emphasized functional and area specialization, flexible problem-solving groupings, and open communication channels.

The Washington state OEO staff was composed of a director, a secretary, a management/employment specialist, an academic planning specialist, and a research analyst. With this set up, specific responsibilities were assigned for in-depth coverage of various content areas, yet staff were free to work together in specific tasks.

In Vermont, a similar flexible configuration was developed, with a planner given responsibility for insuring that staff activities were carried out within a framework of accountability.

In contrast, less successful staff configurations were characterized by small staff size and reliance upon the initiative of one or two generalists. The New York project, for example, had one full-time staff member who stayed with the project from beginning until end.

For four months he had only one full-time assistant, and for three months a part-time assistant.

Texas relied upon two full-time generalists, a secretary, and a student intern to carry out project activities. these arrangements were clearly insufficient for the tasks on hand.

2. Combined short-range planning and program assistance objectives proved most successful in the OEO projects. Projects emphasizing the more traditional view of planning as an intellectual activity distinct from implementation and operation met with less success.

The combination of planning and program assistance and implementation appeared to be successful for several reasons: (1) it provides a realistic indication of the scope and dimensions of needed efforts; (2) it provides a field test and evaluation of planning concepts; (3) it generates new understanding of problems and steps which might be undertaken to overcome them; and (4) it provides demonstrable results for concerned legislators and administrators.

The Vermont Regional Community College Commission, in actually planning and setting up a demonstration community college system, successfully bridged the gap between planning and implementation, between means and consequences.